

MRS. FLORALEE WRIGHT -

(Bahai World Faith)

INTERVIEWED:

March 19, 1975

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Group meets in homes of members, every 19 days. First meeting in Richmond held early 1967 as an Assembly. Early groups, meeting for a few years prior to that. The Assembly was formed of 9 people under the rules of the Faith and has grown to about 18 people. The present Assembly was formed about 1970.

#### Background

- At the moment, no Orientals, but there was one in 1967. There are no members of any ethnic group in the community at the moment.

#### Upkeep

- Every member makes voluntary contributions monthly to the community. Most is sent to the National Assembly and some used in teaching in the community.

#### Foundation

- Founded in 1844 in Iran (Persia) by the Bab. The Faith is persecuted in Persia now, where they still have Assemblies but very little freedom. The World Centre now is in Haifa, Israel. Faith is an independent World Faith with no alliance with Muslim or any other religion.

#### Clergy

- There are no clergy, every member being a teacher.

#### Meetings

- Held every 19 days. These Unity Feasts are composed of 3 sections: first part spiritual where the writings of Baha'u'llah and his son Abdu'l-baha are read, second part is a consultative period with reports and consultations of activities, third part is social.

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### Community

- Is the community of the group. Assembly are the 9 members of executive and the rest make up the community. Assembly is made up of residents of Richmond. Unity Feasts are open to other Baha'is but not to non-members.

### Interest in the Baha'i

- Mrs. Wright heard about Baha'u'llah on the radio, went to the Library and telephoned some Baha'is, meeting them at coffee meetings, later signing her declaration.

### Tenets of Faith

1. One God
2. The "oneness" of mankind
3. Independent investigation of truth
4. The common foundation of all religions
5. The essential harmony of science & religion
6. Equality of men & women
7. Elimination of prejudice of all kinds
8. Universal compulsory education
9. A spiritual solution of the economic problems
10. A universal auxiliary language
11. Universal peace upheld by a world government

### Universal Language

- Esperanto was supported by Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Faith, but the general belief is that the language will probably be an existing language or a manufactured one when the world is ready.

### Solution of the Economic Problem

Mrs. Wright quotes from BAHAI Teachings for a WORLD FAITH:

"Among the results of the manifestation of spiritual forces will be that the human world will adapt itself to a new social form, the justice of God will become manifest throughout human affairs and human equality will be universally established. The poor will receive a great bestowal and the rich attain eternal happiness. For although at the present time the rich enjoy the greatest luxury and comfort, they are nevertheless deprived of eternal happiness; for eternal happiness is contingent upon giving

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and the poor are everywhere in the state of abject need. Through the manifestation of God's equity the poor of the world will be rewarded and assisted fully and there will be a readjustment in the economic conditions of mankind so that in the future there will not be the abnormally rich nor the abject poor. The rich will enjoy the privilege of this new economic condition as well as the poor, for owing to certain provisions and restriction they will not be able to accumulate so much as to be burdened by its management, while the poor will be relieved from the stress of want and misery."

- Some means of doing this will be by profit sharing, redistribution of Income Tax, reverse Income Tax, the breaking up of massive inheritances.

#### Role of Women

- Absolutely equal with men, except at the level of the Universal House of Justice to which only men can be elected.

#### Hierarchy

- After local Spiritual Assembly, then National Spiritual Assembly in each country, above that is Universal House of Justice in Haifa. All members to assemblies are elected (9 in number). Headquarters for Canada is in Toronto. Ultimate goal is to have a temple in each jurisdiction plus a college, hospital, school pilgrim house, administrative centre, rest home, in the complex. Temple would have 9 sides. Nine as a symbol is the complete number and is the value in the Persian alphabet of "Baha".

#### Origins of Faith

- Mission was declared in 1844 by the Bab, to a young Muslim who was looking for the Promised One. The Bab foretold this manifestation. The Bab was martyred in 1850. His followers, the Babis were without a leader. The Baha'u'llah had been designated leader by the Bab and he declared his station in 1863 from Baghdad, but as an attempt had been made on the life of the Shah, the Babis were persecuted and exiled from Iran. Baha'u'llah was exiled to Baghdad. Again he was exiled to Constantinople and there in the garden of Rizwan he declared his mission. This time is

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celebrated as a Feast time at the end of April, a 12-day celebration. Baha'u'llah was again exiled to Adrianople. While he was there he wrote letters to all world leaders and kings proclaiming his message as the Promised One, but these were ignored. Again was exiled to Akka, a prison city in Israel. He died there in 1892. He appointed his son Abdu 'l-Baha as interpreter of the Faith. He was also a prisoner of the Turks but was released in 1908.

1912 he visited America & Montreal. He died in 1922 when he appointed Grandson, Shogi Effendi, as Guardian of the Faith until his death in 1957. By then he had found the basis for the Universal House of Justice and its elections. The first House was elected 1963. Faith active in over 300 countries now. Very many in Muslim areas but dealings with Muslims are guarded, even though Baha'is recognize Mohammed and all other prophets.

#### Calendar

- Set up by Bab, of 19 days divisions or Vahids with the remaining Intercalary days being festive days. As the interview was held March 19th, Mrs. Wright explained that they were coming to the end of their year. The New Year, or Naw-Ruz, is the vernal equinox of March 21. Mrs. Wright describes the ceremonies ahead.

#### Youth

- Youth can not serve on local Assembly, they can be active in the meetings. There are none at the moment in Richmond. There are a few children. Some of Richmond group have moved away but have started Baha'i groups where they have settled.

#### Plans for Future

- Continuation of teaching. Strengthening of community. Would like to become Incorporated when large enough. No discussion on building a Temple.

#### Events of Importance

- 1969 - Visit of Hand of the Cause, John Robarts. These are special teachers appointed by Shogi Effendi, but when they pass on will be replaced by Continental Board of Councillors. Florence Mayberry of this Board visited Richmond in 1971.

MURIEL NOBLE